

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY NEA/ARN::PKBULLEN:GCB

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N EA/ARN - AMB. GODLEY

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, LE, US

SUBJECT: PRESS STORY ON LUGGAGE

1. FOLLOWING IS WASHINGTON POST STORY PUBLISHED NOV. 26:
2. QUOTE - WHEN LEBANESE PRESIDENT SULEIMAN FRANJIEH CAME TO THE UNITED NATIONS RECENTLY, HE WAS ANNOYED THAT HE WAS MET NOT BY A RANKING AMERICAN DIPLOMAT BUT BY SOME LESSER OFFICIALS. BUT HE WAS EVEN MORE UPSET BECAUSE A DOG WAS BROUGHT ALONG TO SNIFF THE BAGGAGE ON HIS SPECIAL PLANE IN SEARCH OF HASHISH.
3. FRANJIEH, WHO HAD PREVIOUSLY INFORMED THE UNITED STATES "THAT THERE WERE NO DRUGS ABOARD THE PLANE, TOOK THE SEARCH AS AN INSULT. AMERICAN OFFICIALS ARE ANXIOUSLY TRYING TO SMOOTH THINGS OVER.

STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN PAUL HARE SAID YESTERDAY THAT THERE WAS AN UNFORTUNATE MISUNDERSTANDING ON PROCEDURES IN NEW YORK...WE HAVE EXPRESSED REGRET AND ASSURED THEM THAT NO OFFENSE WAS INTENDED TO LEBANON OR PRESIDENT FRANJIEH."

4. LEBANESE REGARD DOGS AS UNCLEAR ANIMALS, SO THE INDIG-
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NITY OF HAVING BAGGAGE SNIFFED BY A SPECIALLY TRAINED DOG

WAS FELT MORE KEENLY BY FRANJIEH AND HIS ENTOURAGE THAN IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN BY PEOPLE OF ANOTHER NATIONALITY.

IT WAS LEARNED THAT THE DRUG SEARCH WAS SUPPOSED TO HAVE BEEN CARRIED OUT BEHIND THE SCENES OUT OF SIGHT OF THE LEBANESE. NO BAGS WERE OPENED AND NO HASHISH WAS FOUND. BUT A LEBANESE SECURITY MAN WHO STAYED WITH THE BAGGAGE INFORMED HIS SUPERIORS OF THE SEARCH.

5. U. S. OFFICIALS SAID THAT IT IS NOT UNPRECEDENTED FOR DIPLOMATIC BAGGAGE TO BE INSPECTED. THE PRACTICE, THEY SAID, IS SANCTIONED BY THE VIENNA CONVENTION ON DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS IN CASES WHERE CONTRABAND IS SUSPECTED.

THE OFFICIALS SAID THERE WAS NO SUSPICION ABOUT FRANJIEH'S LUGGAGE OR THAT OF HIS IMMEDIATE FAMILY OR ENTOURAGE. BUT ABOUT 40 PERSONS WERE ABOARD THE MIDDLE EAST AIRLINES FLIGHT, AND SUBORDINATE PERSONNEL OR CREW MEMBERS WERE UNDER SUSPICION AS THE RESULT OF A TIP.

6. THE BAGGAGE INCIDENT IS ONLY ONE OF SEVERAL LEBANESE GRIEVANCES AGAINST THE UNITED STATES. BEIRUT WAS DISTRESSED WHEN THE UNITED STATES EXTENDED AID TO SYRIA, EGYPT AND JORDAN, BUT NOT TO LEBANON.

FUAD NAFFA, THEN THE LEBANESE FOREIGN MINISTER, WAS KEPT WAITING 30 MINUTES WHEN HE WENT TO SEE SECRETARY OF STATE HENRY A. KISSINGER LAST APRIL. THE PRESENT FOREIGN MINISTER, PHILIPPE TAQLA, DID NOT GET TO SEE KISSINGER AT ALL AT THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY'S OPENING SESSION.

FINALLY, THE LEBANESE ARE UNHAPPY BECAUSE FRANJIEH, WHO CAME TO THE UNITED STATES AS SPOKESMAN FOR ALL THE ARABS WHO ATTENDED THE RABAT SUMMIT MEETING, GOT LITTLE PRESS COVERAGE IN THIS COUNTRY. - END QUOTE

7. FOLLO'ING IS NEW YORK TIMES STORY PUBLISHED NOV. 26:

8. QUOTE - AN OFFICIAL APOLOGY HAS BEEN SENT TO PRESIDENT SULEIMAN FRANJIEH OF LEBANON OVER AN INCIDENT ON NOV. 10
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WHEN UNITED STATES CUSTOMS SERVICE DOGS WERE USED TO SNIFF FOR DRUGS IN THE LUGGAGE OF HIS PARTY AT KENNEDY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT.

9. PAUL J. HARE, THE STATE DEPARTMENT SPOKESMAN, SAID THE INCIDENT WHICH CAUSED AMBASSADOR G. MCMURTRIE GODLEY TO RETURN TO WASHINGTON LAST FRIDAY FOR CONSULTATIONS, WAS A RESULT OF "AN UNFORTUNATE MISUNDERSTANDING" ABOUT UNITED

STATES NARCOTICS CONTROL PROCEDURES IN NEW YORK.

AMERICAN OFFICIALS SAID DRUG CONTROL OFFICIALS HAD RECEIVED INFORMATION SUGGESTING THAT SOME MEMBERS OF PRESIDENT

FRANJIEH'S PARTY MIGHT USE THE OCCASION OF HIS VISIT TO THE UNITED NATIONS TO BRING DRUGS INTO THIS COUNTRY.

10. THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT WAS INFORMED OF THIS BY AMBASSADOR GODLEY, WHO WAS TOLD THAT LEBANESE OFFICIALS WOULD SEE TO IT THAT NO ONE CARRIED NARCOTICS.

BUT THE CUSTOMS SERVICE CONDUCTED A ROUTINE SEARCH WITH ITS SPECIALLY TRAINED DOGS ANYWAY, AMERICAN OFFICIALS SAID.

WHEN HE LEARNED OF THIS MR. FRANJIEH BECAME VERY ANNOYED, OFFICIALS SAID, AND CUT SHORT HIS STAY IN NEW YORK. HE RETURNED TO BEIRUT ON NOV. 15, ALTHOUGH HE HAD BEEN SCHEDULED TO FLY THAT DAY TO WASHINGTON FOR A POSSIBLE MEETING WITH PRESIDENT FORD.

11. CUSTOMS UNAWARE OF ASSURANCE - A HIGH OFFICIAL OF THE UNITED STATES CUSTOMS SERVICE IN NEW YORK SAID YESTERDAY THAT THE AGENCY HAD BEEN UNAWARE OF LEBANON'S OFFICIAL ASSURANCES THAT THERE WOULD BE NO HASHISH IN THE BAGGAGE OF ANY MEMBER OF PRESIDENT FRANJIEH'S PARTY UPON ARRIVAL AT KENNEDY AIRPORT ON NOV. 10.

CUSTOMS OFFICIALS GENERALLY CORROBORATED THE ACCOUNT OF THE INCIDENT ISSUED IN WASHINGTON BUT INSISTED THAT THE LEBANESE PRESIDENT AND HIS PARTY HAD BEEN ACCORDED THE USUAL DIPLOMATIC COURTESIES. THEY EMPHASIZED THAT NO UNCLASSIFIED

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BAGGAGE HAD BEEN OPENED OR OTHERWISE TOUCHED BY INSPECTORS EXCEPTING THAT NARCOTICS-DETECTOR DOGS HAD BEEN WALKED PAST IT.

12. SOME FEDERAL OFFICIALS HERE ALSO SUGGESTED THAT PRESIDENT FRANJIEH'S RESENTMENT STEMMED IN LARGE PART FROM THE ABSENCE OF A STATE DEPARTMENT WELCOMING PARTY. - UNQUOTE. INGERSOLL

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